

Faro del Puerto de Ponce
(Cayo Cardona Light)
Cayo Cardona, Puerto de Ponce
Ponce vicinity
Ponce
Puerto Rico

HAER No. PR-16

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Engineering Record
National Park Service
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HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

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(Cayo Cardona Light)

PR-16

Location: On Cardona Key, at the entrance to Ponce Harbor; the south shore of Puerto Rico
Position: 17° 57' 3" N - 66° 38' 8" W

Date of Erection: 1889

Present Owner: U.S. Department of Commerce
U.S. Coast Guard

Original Owner: Central Lighthouse Commission
Colonial Public Works Office
Harbor and Port Section
Government of Spain

Present Use: Unoccupied

Significance: Cayo Cardona is located on a small 6 acre key west of Ponce Harbor. The light, built in 1889, guides the entrance to the Port of Ponce, as a 6th order red fixed light.

Structurally, it followed the same construction as three other minor lights on the south shore and south east shore: Punta Figuras, Punta Mulas, and Puerto Ferro. It lacks, though, the distinctive decorative elements of non-existing Punta Higuero or ruinous Guanica. Nevertheless, it possessed a charm of its own: a petite, neo-classic, symmetrically balanced official design.

Cayo Cardona's dwelling was designed of stone and brick for one 2nd class keeper. A 10 mt. circular tower was attached to its south facade. It is an approximately 16.2 x 10 x 5.5 mts. structure. Its main entrance is on the north facade which opened into a room arrangement similar to the other minor structures which will be described in further detail. The fact that no plans of this structure have been found, and that its interior has been closed off with cement makes it difficult to describe. Only secondary references, a late 19th century photo of the site, and official references to

the similar or identical design of the minor lights allows a reserved description of this particular site.

The c. 1898 photo depicts a simple neo-classic building with a rather elaborate cornice and a simple roof parapet. Contrary to other minor lights, the tower is cylindrical, crowned by another cornice less elaborate than the dwelling's. It is mentioned that the structure was painted white and light blue.

The tower cast-iron stairway led to an octagonal glass, copper, and cast-iron lantern with vertical bars and a cast-iron balustrade surrounding an exterior cement gallery.

The original illuminating apparatus, still in use, is an 1888, 6th order fixed red lenticular Sautter, Lemonnier & Cie. lens. It is 30 cm. in diameter. The lens has 4 panels; 5 elements in each panel of the central drum; 5 prisms on each panel above the central drum and 2 below. It was held in place by a cast-iron pedestal. The original light was colored by a red chimney.

The original light characteristics were modified in 1922 and 1938. In 1962 it was electrified and, apparently, unmanned.

Together with Guanica Light it is the western minor light which connects Cabo Rojo and Isla Caja de Muertos Lights and guides the entrance to a port that, during the course of last century, exported millions of pounds of sugar, particularly to the United States. Architecturally, it is significant that it is the only 6th order lighthouse with a cylindrical attached tower. Also, the original brick roof and firewood beams are practically intact.

Transmitted by:

Kevin Murphy, Historian HAER, August 1984;
from the National Register Nomination
prepared by Dr. Benjamin Nistal-Moret,
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